

BETWEEN FLORENCE AND AVIGNON

Domitilla, who had taken Catherine's exhortations as meaning that she, too, was to go to the Holy Sepulchre, " even as He came forth from the womb of the Virgin Mary and as He hung upon the Cross, why wouldst thou abandon Him to go to see a stone ?" This led to a correspondence with William Flete, who supposed that he had attacked Catherine herself, with the result that Don Giovanni, a little later, formally joined her spiritual fellowship. "It will be glorious for me," he wrote, "to be called a heretic with her, that, even as Christ who was reputed a heretic by the Pharisees because He made Himself the Son of God, I may bear the cross of His passion. O most sweet heresy of celestial Catherine, who makest just men out of sinners, and, the friend of publicans and sinners, dost make the Angels smile and heaven rejoice!"¹

In the meanwhile, the Florentines continued to foment the rebellion in the Papal States, and even put a price upon the head of Gomez Albornoz, who was making a valiant defence of the citadel of Ascoli. Nor was the papal court resting on its arms. On May 27, the company of Bretons, six thousand foot and four thousand horse, under the Cardinal Robert of Geneva, left Avignon, with orders to march straight upon Florence. They boasted that, if the sun entered Florence, they would, and that they would make the Pope's brother, the Vicomte de Turenne, lord of the city.

It must always remain a question whether the sending of Catherine to Avignon was the result of a temporary victory of Niccolo Soderini and the peace party in the counsels of the Republic, or a mere device on the part of the others to gain time. The Florentine archives apparently hold no record of the matter, and we can only gather what happened from Catherine's own

¹ *Lettere del B. Giovanni dalle Celle*, 19, with which compare Catherine's letter to Monna Pavola, 144 (371). Don Giovanni's letters to William Flete (together with a third, defending Catherine against the Augustinian, Giovanni da Salerno) are given by Gigli at the end of the *Opere*, vol. ii. pp. 985-997. They are included, with three others and a letter from William to Raimondo, in the Palatine MS. 60.